United Nations A/54/287/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 November 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda items 118 and 123

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on results-based budgeting: the experience of the United Nations system organizations

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Results-based budgeting: the experience of the United Nations system organizations" (A/54/287).

99-33097 (E) 051199

Comments of the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Results-based budgeting: the experience of United Nations system organizations"

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/205, by which the General Assembly requested the Joint Inspection Unit to undertake an analytical and comparative study of the experience of the bodies of the United Nations system that are implementing an approach similar to results-based budgeting. In accordance with article 11 of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General is providing his comments thereon.

2. In its resolution 53/205, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive and analytical report on his proposal on results-based budgeting, together with a number of prototype fascicles in results-based format. That report and its addenda (A/54/456 and Add.1-5), which contain the Secretary-General's proposals for introducing results-based budgeting elements at the United Nations, are currently before the General Assembly. In preparing the report on results-based budgeting, the Secretary-General was able to take into account, where appropriate, the observations and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit contained in its report.

II. General comments

3. The Secretary-General welcomes the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. It has highlighted areas of concern that require special attention and provides experiences of other organizations of the United Nations system from which lessons can be learned in the development and implementation of results-based budgeting elements, should the General Assembly decide to proceed on the basis of the Secretary-General's proposals contained in document A/54/456. The Secretary-General believes that the nature of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit will be of assistance to Member States in their consideration of his proposals on results-based budgeting.

III. Comments on the recommendations

Recommendation 1:

In order to assure appropriate guidance from Member States in resolving the problem of the lack of agreed definitions for key results-based budgeting terms, the *Glossary of financial and budgetary terms*, currently being updated by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, should be reviewed and commented upon by the appropriate bodies of the United Nations system organizations.

4. The recommendation is welcomed. In addition, in recognition of the need for clear terminology, the Secretary-General, in annexes I and II of his report (A/54/456), has endeavoured to provide a clearer definition of relevant terms, as well as suggested guidelines for programme managers in the formulation of objectives and expected accomplishments.

Recommendation 2:

As a means for seeking to resolve existing concerns about the possible adaptation of results-based budgeting to the United Nations, and in order to assure an appropriate participatory role of Member States in adapting results-based budgeting to the United Nations, an open-ended working group should be established at the level of the Fifth Committee, to meet during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and thereafter, as needed, within existing resource levels, at which secretariat officials, including from secretariats of other organizations, to the extent possible, would provide briefings and respond to questions on all aspects of results-based budgeting.

5. The Secretary-General welcomes the recommendation and concurs with the need to maintain a clear dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat on the issue of results-based budgeting.

Recommendation 3:

Subject to a General Assembly decision to use results-based budgeting for the United Nations, the United Nations Staff College and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research should be invited to conduct seminars and workshops to help familiarize staff and representatives of Member States with results-based budgeting.

6. This recommendation is welcomed. The Secretary-General will provide assistance as appropriate.

Recommendation 4:

Future reporting from the Secretary-General on results-based budgeting should include a comprehensive assessment of changes that would be required to assure the readiness of the Organization for results-based budgeting, regarding areas such as regulations, procedures, management information systems and training.

7. The Secretary-General took this recommendation into account in preparing his report on results-based budgeting (A/54/456). Paragraphs 64 to 73 of that report provide a description of changes or conditions necessary for the implementation of the results-based budgeting elements.

Recommendation 5:

Reflecting the uncertainty about how to reflect external factors in the accountability of programme managers under results-based budgeting, the Secretary-General should submit to the General Assembly as soon as possible a report containing recommendations on the matter, accompanied by the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

8. In paragraphs 32 and 33 of his report on results-based budgeting, the Secretary-General has focused on the question of external factors. His analysis of the question takes into account the aspects highlighted by the Joint Inspection Unit.

Recommendation 6:

In view of their roles in the current programme budget process, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions should be invited to comment on their respective roles under results-based budgeting.

9. The Secretary-General notes the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit. A description of the expected changes in the review and approval process of the programme budget is provided in paragraphs 57 to 59 of his report on results-based budgeting.